prior approval of the Central Government. Such diversion has been permitted in some cases in the past on the merits of each case.

Statement

Steps taken to conserve forests

1. Forest (Conservation) Act was enacted in 1980 to check diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes.

2. A Centrally sponsored scheme has been started to help the States to develop infrastructure for enforcement of legal provisions for the protection of forests.

3. Alternative sources of energy are being developed to replace fuelwood in domestic and commercial sector.

4. Wood is being substituted by alternative materials in packaging, railway sleepers and building conssructions.

5. Import policy for forest products has been liberalised.

6. Fiscal incentives are given to industries for wood substitution.

7. Efforts are being made to conrtol shifting cultivation.

8. Guidelines have been issued to State Governments from time to time for protection of forests. Some of these guidelines are as follows:

(i) to avoid clear felling of natural forests and where such fellings are inevitable for restoration of crop or other silvicultural considerations, it should be restricted to areas exceeding 10 hectares in the hills and 25 hectares in the plains.

(ii) to consider banning of fellings in the hills above 1000 metres, at least for some years.

(iii) to identify critical areas in the hills and mountains which require protection from felling of forests and need immediate vigorous afforestation.

(iv) to set apart 4 per cent of the geographical area as protection areas like wildlife sanctuaries, national parks, biosphere reserve etc.

Dialogue with PLA of Manipur

868. SHRI CHITTA BASU: Will the Minister of HOME AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Peoples Liberation Army of Manipur was declared illegal in 1981;

(b) whether a section of the PLA has indicated their desire that they are willing to lay down their arms if suitable forum is created for an affective dialogue with Government for the solution of basic problems of Manipur people; and

(c) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES AND PENSIONS AND THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HOME AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The Peoples Liberation Army of Manipur was declared unlawful in October, 1979 and since then the ban has been extended from time to time. The last notification declaring it as unlawful was issued on 26-10-87.

(b) and (c) The Government are not aware of any communication to this effect. The policy of the Government has been to deal firmly with activities of extremists groups, but if any such group is willing for a peaceful solution through negotiations it must fulfil two pre-conditions, viz., to accept the Constitution of India and to abjure violence.